

CWS Office of the Ombudsperson

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services, Child Welfare Services (CWS) now has an ombudsperson who provides the following services:

- Independent review of concerns or complaints
- Information, consultation and facilitation
- Assistance with problem resolution.

What is an Ombudsperson?

An Ombudsperson is an official charged with representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints or violations of rights. The CWS Office of the Ombudsperson investigates concerns or complaints related to CWS policy, procedures, and practices in an independent and objective manner, and develops proposed resolutions.

Purpose and Function

The purpose of the CWS Office of the Ombudsperson is to do the following:

- Provide information and consultation regarding CWS policies, procedures and practices
- Receive and monitor concerns and complaints regarding CWS
- Facilitate communication with pertinent CWS staff for problem resolution in an impartial and objective manner
- Conduct independent internal reviews of concerns or complaints regarding CWS policy, procedure and practices
- Receive and investigate grievances regarding the placement in or removal from a foster home, per Division 31
- Oversee the evaluation and assessment of each concern or complaint
- Elevate findings and recommendations to management to ensure that policies and practices meet state and federal laws, and are consistent with the mission and goals of CWS.

Limitations

The CWS Office of the Ombudsperson does not have authority to do the following:

- Make recommendations to the court or overturn court orders
- Investigate matters in which appeals or lawsuits are pending
- Change or make exceptions to state or federal laws or regulations
- Investigate, make recommendations, or take action in personnel or disciplinary matters
- Give legal advice.



What to do before filing a concern or complaint with the CWS Office of the Ombudsperson

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Before contacting the Office of the Ombudsperson, try to resolve concerns by contacting the following individuals in the order listed:

- Social worker
- Supervisor
- Program manager.

Call the CWS main line at 707-445-6180 to obtain the names of staff assigned to your referral or case. If the complaint remains unresolved, call the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Tips on how to prepare for problem resolution

- Record the names of staff who you have contacted
- Keep records, take notes and record dates of events
- Save all documents.

Other CWS Contacts

For matters concerning the removal or placement of a child or youth, an individual may request a grievance review, in accordance with the state's Division 31-020 regulations of the Manual of Policies and Procedures, by contacting the CWS Office of the Ombudsperson.

For disputes concerning CWS submittal or removal of a child abuse or neglect incident onto the Child Abuse Central Index (CACI), an individual may request a grievance review, pursuant to the state's Division 31-021 of the Manual of Policies and Procedures, by responding to the Request for Grievance Hearing (SOC 834) letter within 30 days.

If the CWS Ombudsperson is unable to resolve your concerns to your satisfaction, you may contact:

State of California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson

Phone: **877-846-1602**

Email: fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov

Mail:

744 P St., MS 8-13-25

Sacramento, CA 95814

or

California Department of Social Services State Hearings Division

Phone: **800-743-8525 or 855-795-0634**

Mail:

P.O. Box 944243, Mail Station 9-17-37

Sacramento, CA 94244-2430

Other CWS Concerns

- When CWS files a petition in the Juvenile Court, any parties to the action may, through their attorney, ask the judge to review or change any services being provided or actions being taken by CWS.
- For information, questions or concerns regarding the Resource Family Approval (RFA) program, call the main CWS phone number at 707-445-6180, and ask for RFA.
- For information, questions or concerns related to the Adoption Program or the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), call the main CWS phone number at 707-445-6180, and ask for Adoptions.



The CWS Office of the Ombudsperson was created in April 2018, and is an internal mechanism for conducting independent review of complaints concerning CWS policies, procedures and practices that originate from clients, caregivers, tribal partners, schools, community partners and members of the public. CWS values customer, community and staff input in problem resolution. All concerns, complaints, and grievances, whether verbal or written, will receive a thoughtful, timely and impartial response.



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